

# NOAA IN THE CARIBBEAN

CONNECTING NOAA & PARTNERS ACROSS THE CARIBBEAN



## NOAA in the Caribbean Newsletter - Summer Edition

### NOAA in the Caribbean Partner Meeting Invitation

Dear NOAA in the Caribbean Community Members,

As we announced in the 2021 winter issue of the NOAA in the Caribbean newsletter, current limits on travel and the state of the COVID-19 pandemic have influenced our decision to hold the 2021 biannual partner meeting virtually, similar to the 2020 Caribbean Community Webinar.

We are pleased to announce that this year's virtual biannual partner meeting will take place on **Wednesday, September 22nd from 9AM-12PM ET**. This year's meeting will focus on the areas of climate and equity, citizen science, and community engagement in the Caribbean region.

To register, please visit <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5143858859733612301>. Should you have questions or want more information, please contact [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov).

Thank you,  
The NOAA in the Caribbean Executive Team

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### UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021-2030: A Decade for Action in the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions

**Christa von Hillebrandt-Andrade (UNESCO/IOC - NOAA International Tsunami Information Center Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program) and Katie Geddes (NOAA Research, Office of International Activities)**



(Photo Caption: UN Decade of Ocean Science Logo)

The UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, the “Ocean Decade”, started on January 1, 2021. It has the ambition to trigger a revolution in ocean science that will take us from ‘the ocean we have’ to ‘the ocean we want’. The notion of transformation is central to the Ocean Decade. It means moving beyond business as usual to support long-lasting impacts to reverse the cycle of decline in the ocean. The Ocean Decade will harness and stimulate innovative ocean research, from co-design to co-delivery, to achieve Decade outcomes<sup>1</sup>, as well as to contribute to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Following the [High Level Kick Off](#) of the Decade in June, 2021, a series of global [Ocean Decade Laboratories](#) are taking place through May 2022. Each Laboratory is to focus on one of the seven Outcomes of the Decade. It is an opportunity for exchange, collaboration and the creation of sustainable partnerships among the participants. Each lab encompasses a Core Event that is complemented by a diverse range of Satellite Activities during a time slot of 48 hours for global access. The first lab, [Inspiring and Engaging Ocean](#), took place on July 7-8. The next Laboratory is [Predicted Ocean](#) on September 15-17, followed by Clean Ocean on November 17-18. The other labs are still under development.

### **NOAA and U.S. National Engagement in the Decade**

NOAA has been actively engaged since the planning stages through U.S. participation in the UNESCO Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) and its Sub-Commissions, engagement with the Decade Coordination Unit, and through Craig McLean, Assistant Administrator for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and Christa von Hillebrandt-Andrade, Manager of the Caribbean Tsunami Warning Program, who serve on the Interim Decade Advisory Board (DAB). A NOAA Ocean and Coastal Council (NOCC) Task Force and Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (SOST) Interagency Working Group (IWG) have a leading role. With support of NOAA, the U.S. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine have also convened the [U.S. National Committee](#) for the Decade.

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<sup>1</sup> A Predicted Ocean, A Clean Ocean, A Healthy and Resilient Ocean, A Productive Ocean, A Safe Ocean, A Transparent and Accessible Ocean and An Inspiring and Engaging Ocean

To date the U.S. Government (USG) submitted a total of 17 Actions to the first Call for Decade Actions, including several from NOAA. These are in addition to those submitted by non-USG entities. The IOC [endorsed](#) most of these in June 2021.

The second Call for Decade Actions will be released in early September, 2021 (date TBC).

### **Decade in the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions**

In the Caribbean, the [IOC Sub-Commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions \(IOCARIBE\)](#) is the coordinating body for the Decade. IOCARIBE convened a Western Tropical Atlantic Regional Workshop 28-29 April 2020, and another on Co-Design took place 4 November. A [Western Tropical Atlantic Planning Group](#) is coordinating strategic partnerships, funding and actions. IOCARIBE is organizing a Series, between July and October, to catalyze the co-design process. NOAA and other federal and US stakeholders are actively involved. Proposals for actions are to be developed and submitted for endorsement through the Ocean Decade Governance bodies. The virtual regional launch for the Ocean Decade is scheduled for December 9, 2021.

Through NOAA in the Caribbean we hope to keep stakeholders updated on this exciting opportunity to make a difference for the ocean and the life and livelihoods that depend on it.

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### **World Ocean School Experiences in the Virgin Islands**



(Photo Caption: A Maritime Academy student takes notes on a lesson about cold fronts.)



The World Ocean School is proud to provide students of St. Croix unique hands-on learning experiences aboard the historic Schooner *Roseway* each winter. With a 137' tall ship and the surrounding ocean as place-based platform for learning, students develop socio-emotional skills, explore maritime history and literature, and study STEM concepts and their real-life applications—all while learning to be an integral crew member of *Roseway*.

While programming is interdisciplinary by nature, World Ocean School emphasizes the importance of being stewards of the sea. In many World Ocean School programs, students take up samples of surrounding waters and study the pH, salinity, temperature, and turbidity and discuss the impacts of climate change on water quality and local corals. Programs developed for St. Croix's high school students give a glimpse into local maritime career pathways, promoting regionalized workforce development. No matter the specified curriculum, students depart understanding that humans are inextricably connected to the sea.

After a World Ocean School program aboard *Roseway*, students can tangibly see how their actions can positively impact their environment and their community, have grown in confidence and situational awareness, and walk away with an understanding that they can use their voice for good. World Ocean School has operated in the Virgin Islands each winter since 2006, and looks forward to sailing into Christiansted Harbor and inspiring students of all ages for years to come."



(Photo Caption: World Ocean School ran safe, socially distanced dockside programming in the wake of COVID-19. This student learned about the wheel and axle used to help steer *Roseway*.)

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## What's Happening with Marine Debris in the Caribbean

The mission of the NOAA Marine Debris Program is to *investigate and prevent the adverse impacts of marine debris*. Our [FY21-25 Strategic Plan](#) will help achieve this mission through six goals: Prevention, Removal, Research, Monitoring and Detection, Response, and Coordination. There are many opportunities to be part of the solution to this worldwide problem and the NOAA Marine Debris Program is currently supporting several exciting projects happening in our Caribbean region of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI)!

### **Prevention**

- Girls in Science -
  - Through this project and with the collaboration of the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (NMSF), a group of young women from the Specialized School in Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology (CIMATEC) in Puerto Rico, were trained by female professionals on marine debris. As a result, they produced a [series of Spanish videos](#) on the topic and established a club to engage more girls into the protection of our coasts through science and community involvement.
- Abandoned and Derelict Vessel ADV database -
  - Also with the support from the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, abandoned and derelict vessels (ADV) around Puerto Rico will be identified and added to a database, and partnerships with local governments will be established in order to identify resources for the future removal of these vessels and future removals of these debris types.

### **Removal**

- University of the Virgin Islands
  - The University of the Virgin Islands' Center for Environmental Studies is removing hurricane-deposited marine debris from vulnerable mangrove shorelines, through a series of cleanups called "Great Mangrove Cleanups", along with developing a USVI Marine Debris Action Plan to strategically tackle marine debris in the territory.
- Conservación ConCiencia
  - The Ocean Foundation and Conservación ConCiencia are removing harmful derelict fishing gear from the waters around Puerto Rico while building capacity within the USVI to address marine debris in the region.

### **Monitoring and Detection**

- The [Marine Debris Monitoring and Assessment Project](#) (MDMAP), the NOAA Marine Debris Program's citizen science initiative to engage volunteers in regular shoreline marine debris surveys, has recently updated the protocol, training materials and database to include new data visualizations. Interested in starting a local project? Please contact [hillary.burgess@noaa.gov](mailto:hillary.burgess@noaa.gov).

## **Response**

- [Marine Debris Emergency Response Guides](#) - The Marine Debris Program facilitates the creation of marine debris emergency response guides in coordination with federal, state, and local stakeholders in order to improve preparedness and help responders in the management of marine debris after incidents. The USVI guide was published in early 2020 and the PR guide is under development and expected to be released in the next couple of months.
- [Disaster Relief Funding](#) - USVI and Puerto Rico are still recovering after the wake of the 2017 Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Both territories received funding from the NOAA Marine Debris Program and are currently working on debris removal activities.

## **Coordination**

- The NOAA Marine Debris Program's Caribbean region has two points of contact. Please feel free to reach out to us for questions and ideas.
  - Ashley Hill - Florida and the Caribbean Regional Coordinator
    - [ashley.hill@noaa.gov](mailto:ashley.hill@noaa.gov)
  - Yaritza Rivera - Hurricane Response Coordinator
    - [yaritza.rivera@noaa.gov](mailto:yaritza.rivera@noaa.gov)
- Other activities and resources that might catch your eye...
  - The NOAA Marine Debris Program's Fiscal Year 2022 Marine Debris Removal grant opportunity is currently accepting letters of intent until September 24, 2021. Please visit [Grants.gov](https://www.noaa.gov/grants) and the NOAA Marine Debris Program's [website](#) for additional information.
  - We are also hosting a monthly [Abandoned and Derelict Vessel webinar series](#) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 3 pm EDT. The webinar series, which has featured several Caribbean presenters, aims to share perspectives from across the country on common issues arising from abandoned and derelict vessels, in hopes to help communities better deal with them.
  - The recently released [NOAA Marine Debris Program Education page](#) is an easy-to-use platform providing access to free educational materials for a variety of audiences.

Stay tuned for the new marine debris projects to be announced soon!



(Photo Caption: Debris pulled out of the mangroves at the 2021 St. John Great Mangrove Cleanup in Coral Bay, USVI. Credit: The University of the Virgin Islands)

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## **NOAA Fisheries Increases Swordfish and Shark Fishing Opportunities in the Caribbean**

Earlier this year, NOAA Fisheries published a final rule that, effective June 1, 2021, increased the swordfish and shark retention limits of three open access commercial permits in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands: the Highly Migratory Species (HMS) Charter/Headboat (with a commercial sales endorsement), the Swordfish General Commercial, and the Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permits. These final measures, among others, were implemented in an effort to address public requests to increase opportunities to harvest swordfish and a limited number of sharks in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

For swordfish, NOAA Fisheries increased the default trip limit to 18 swordfish per vessel per trip for all three permits and created a combined default trip limit of 3 sharks per vessel per trip for the HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit. Specifically, HMS Commercial Caribbean Small Boat permit holders can retain only the following sharks: tiger, blacktip, bull, spinner, lemon, Atlantic sharpnose, finetooth, bonnethead, and smoothhound sharks (including smooth dogfish). The retention of pelagic sharks (mako, blue, porbeagle, and oceanic whitetip sharks),



blacknose sharks, hammerhead sharks, silky sharks, sandbar sharks, and any shark that is currently in the prohibited list is not allowed.

NOAA Fisheries is currently undertaking outreach efforts through the creation of educational videos, workshops, and shark identification/catch and release placards in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The goal of these efforts is to inform commercial fishermen and the general public of these regulatory changes and to improve shark identification and knowledge of permit and reporting requirements in the Caribbean.

For more information, please contact Dr. Delisse Ortiz, Fishery Management Specialist, ECS contractor in support of NOAA's Office of Sustainable Fisheries, at [delisse.ortiz@noaa.gov](mailto:delisse.ortiz@noaa.gov).

To view the final management measures go to

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/action/final-rule-Changes-some-north-atlantic-swordfish-and-shark-retention-limits-and-inseason>



(Photo Caption: Tiger Shark)



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**NCCOS-funded project aimed at socio-economic impacts of *Sargassum* in coastal communities in the Caribbean**



(Photo Caption: Sargassum on a Caribbean beach. Credit: University of Miami)

**Do you live or work in the Greater Caribbean region? Do you have experience with fisheries, tourism, recreation, or other coastal businesses? Do you have knowledge of coastal management? Have you experienced any seaweed or other algae blooms in the Caribbean?**

If you answered **YES** to any of these questions, we want to hear from you!

Our team of researchers is conducting a survey to learn more about how *Sargassum* events and related management strategies impact people who live or work in the Caribbean region. **As someone with strong ties to the Caribbean region, your participation will be valuable for us whether or not you have seen or experienced seaweed events in your area.**

The survey may take up to 15 minutes to complete. Click on this link to take the survey: [https://uri.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4NLhaRYdJAMI0S](https://uri.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4NLhaRYdJAMI0S) (available in English, Spanish, and French)

Please forward this survey to colleagues and friends who might be willing to share their thoughts on resource management, coastal businesses, or *Sargassum*. For more information on the project, visit our project website: <https://web.uri.edu/maf/2021/06/30/sargassum/>; feel free to

reach out to the team members listed on the website with thoughts or questions - we would love to hear from you.

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## Announcements

- 1) **Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Fund at CFVI Accepting Applications for 2021 Funding - US Virgin Islands** – The Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands (CFVI) announces the availability of funding to support studies and activities in the insular Caribbean that address environmental concerns which transcend the boundaries of a single island or island state. Funded by the *Judith A. Towle Environmental Studies Fund* at CFVI, up to \$7,000 is available to support activities that include internships, research studies, workshops, seminars, lectureships, citizen science, or publications. **Application Process.** Applications will be accepted as single-file attachments, not to exceed three (3) single-spaced typed pages, sent via email to [general.info@cfvi.net](mailto:general.info@cfvi.net). Please use the subject line: APPLICATION FOR JUDITH TOWLE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES FUND. **Application Submission Deadline: September 30, 2021.**
- 2) There are upcoming **regional UN Decade Workshops** as well as the Regional Decade Launch Activity on October 28, 2021. For more information on regional decade activities and the link to sign up for one of more regional decade Working Groups, the website is <http://iocaribe.ioc-unesco.org/undecade>
- 3) The purpose of this notice is to encourage non Federal entities to partner with the NOAA **National Ocean Service Brennan Matching Fund** ocean and coastal mapping programs on jointly funded ocean and coastal surveys and related activities of mutual interest. NOAA would receive and match partner funds and rely on its existing contract arrangements to conduct the surveying and mapping activities in FY 2023. Proposals must be received via email by 5 p.m. ET on October 29, 2021.
- 4) The newly released **Coral Reef Resilience Online Course** is designed to provide marine managers and practitioners with the necessary background to support coral reef resilience in the face of climate change. The free online course is accessible to participants around the world, takes approximately six hours to complete, and consists of six lessons:
  1. Coral Reef Ecology
  2. Threats to Coral Reefs
  3. Principles of Reef Resilience
  4. Assessing and Monitoring Reefs
  5. Resilience-Based Management
  6. Management Strategies for Resilience

This course is hosted on The Nature Conservancy's free online course platform [Conservation Training](#). The lessons were developed with contributions from dozens of scientists, managers, and practitioners from around the world.

## NOAA in the Caribbean Newsletter

If you wish to subscribe to NOAA in the Caribbean's newsletter or the community distribution list, please fill out this [form](#).

If you wish to submit any questions, comments, story ideas, artwork or photographs, please email us at [CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov](mailto:CaribbeanNews@noaa.gov).

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